

PATENT

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Appl. No.: 09/990,779 Confirmation No.: 3140
Appellant(s): Jones et al.
Filed: November 14, 2001
Art Unit: 2171
Examiner: Al-Hashemi, Sana A.
Title: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR PROCESSING TRAVEL DATA IN A
RELATIONAL DATABASE

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REPLY BRIEF UNDER 37 CFR § 1.193(b)(1)

This Reply Brief is filed pursuant to 37 CFR §1.193(b)(1) and is filed in response to the Examiner's Answer of September 5, 2007, the Examiner's Answer being in response to a Revised Appeal Brief filed May 16, 2007. This Brief addresses a number of points arising from the Appeal Brief, as well as the Examiner's Answer to the same.

10. Response to Argument.

The Examiner's Answer responded to Appellants arguments under subsections B-E of section 7 of the Appeal Brief. Accordingly, Appellants address the Examiner's position under those same subsections below. Again, currently, pending Claims 1-45 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,442,526 to Vance et al.

B. Claims 1-12 are Patentably Distinct from the Vance Patent

As explained in the Appeal Brief, in contrast to the method and apparatus of independent Claims 1 and 7, the Vance patent does not teach or suggest displaying available travel units in a calendar-based user interface, or more particularly in at least a portion of a calendar of a calendar-based user interface. The Vance patent does disclose a graphical user interface of a trip planning module, where the graphical user interface includes a calendar for displaying components of a trip planned by a user, such as by displaying a selected flight, hotel, and/or rental car. However, the graphical user interface of the Vance patent does not display available travel units (e.g., available seats), as does the claimed invention of independent Claims 1 and 7. Instead, the graphical user interface of the Vance patent displays only those components of a trip selected by the user.

In section 10 of the Examiner's Answer, the Examiner cites FIG. 14A and column 11, lines 41-44 for allegedly supporting the Examiner's position that the Vance patent does disclose displaying available travel units as recited by independent Claims 1 and 7. Appellants respectfully disagree that the aforementioned portions of the Vance patent, or any other portion of the Vance patent, teach or suggest the aforementioned feature of independent Claims 1 and 7. Again, independent Claims 1 and 7 recite a calendar-based user interface, a calendar of the calendar-based user interface, and displaying available travel units in at least a portion of that calendar. One could argue that FIG. 14A and column 11, lines 41-44 of the Vance patent disclose a calendar-based user interface including a calendar. Even considering such disclosure, however, the Vance patent does not teach or suggest displaying available travel units in at least a portion of that calendar, as recited by independent Claims 1 and 7.

Again, the calendar disclosed by the Vance patent provides an indication of reserved components of a travel itinerary, including an aircraft icon to indicate a flight reservation for a given day and a hotel icon for a hotel reservation for a given day (see FIG. 14K). Therefore, the Vance patent does not teach or suggest that the calendar includes an indication of whether a travel unit is allowed on a pre-specified day based on a set of rules, as further recited by dependent Claims 3 and 9. Similarly, the Vance patent does not teach or suggest that the

calendar includes an indication of whether a travel unit is available and/or sold out, as recited by dependent Claims 4 and 10. Further, the Vance patent does not teach or suggest that the calendar includes user-selectable hyperlinks for selecting a desired travel date, as recited by dependent Claims 6 and 12 (reciting a display as including the respective elements, the display being of at least a portion of the calendar per dependent Claims 5 and 11).

For at least the reasons given above, as well as those presented in the Appellants' Appeal Brief, Appellants respectfully submit that independent Claims 1 and 7, and by dependency Claims 2-6 and 8-12, are patentably distinct from the Vance patent.

C. Claims 13-19 are Patentably Distinct from the Vance Patent

As also explained in the Appeal Brief, in contrast to independent Claim 13, the Vance patent does not teach or suggest a user interface including a calendar, and an availability indicator for each day of the calendar that shows available itineraries relating to a query. Also, the Vance patent does not teach or suggest a user interface that includes an applicability indicator for each day of the calendar that shows itineraries that apply based on a set of rules and restrictions from travel providers. The Vance patent does disclose a graphical user interface including a calendar. The calendar of the Vance patent, however, displays components of a trip planned by a user, such as by displaying a reserved flight, hotel, and/or rental car. The calendar of the Vance patent does not display, for each day, available fares relating to a query or itineraries related to the query that apply based on a set of rules and restrictions from travel providers, as recited by independent Claim 13.

In section 10 of the Examiner's Answer, the Examiner cites FIG. 14E and column 12, lines 28-34 for allegedly supporting the Examiner's position that the Vance patent does disclose the availability indicator recited by independent Claim 13. Appellants respectfully disagree, and submit that FIG. 14E does not in fact illustrate or otherwise disclose an availability indicator for each of a plurality of days of a calendar, the availability indicator showing available itineraries relating to a query. FIG. 14E does illustrate an aircraft icon representing a flight that has been booked by a user; but FIG. 14E does not illustrate or otherwise disclose any icon or other indicator for each of a plurality of days, where the icon or other indicator shows available

itineraries relating to a query. In fact, as disclosed by the column 12 passage cited in the Examiner's Answer, it is only after the user has booked a flight that an icon representing that flight appears in the calendar.

For at least the reasons given above, as well as those presented in the Appellants' Appeal Brief, Appellants respectfully submit that independent Claim 13, and by dependency Claims 14-19, is patentably distinct from the Vance patent.

D. Claims 20-31 are Patentably Distinct from the Vance Patent

As also explained in the Appeal Brief, in contrast to independent Claims 20 and 26, the Vance patent does not teach or suggest a method or apparatus for administering an availability portion of a relational travel database. More particularly, in contrast to independent Claims 20 and 26, the Vance patent does not teach or suggest receiving an availability message, analyzing the availability message to determine affected travel segment(s), querying a schedule portion of a relational database for the affected segment(s), and writing a record to the availability portion of the relational database based on a status portion of the availability message if the respective segment(s) are found in the schedule portion of the relational database.

In section 10 of the Examiner's Answer, the Examiner cites to column 6, lines 39-58 related to a corporation defining static tables for use in implementing Vance's disclosed corporate-centric client-server system; FIGS. 14A-14X related to a user using the corporate-centric client-server system to plan a trip; and column 13, lines 37-47 related to preparing an expense report. Further, the Examiner cites FIG. 14G for allegedly illustrating a relational database displaying a message with availability after receiving a request and analyzing the availability as a Flight List; FIG. 14H for allegedly illustrating a message of an available flight on the side of a calendar; and column 5, lines 18-30 related to a user building an itinerary including displaying availability. Even considering the cited figures and passages of the Vance patent, however, Vance still does not teach or suggest the method or apparatus for administering an availability portion of a relational travel database of independent Claims 20 and 26.

At best, one could argue that the cited figures and passages of the Vance patent disclose that a user building an itinerary may search for flights and receive an indication of the

availability of those flights. The Vance patent does not teach or suggest, however, a travel provider providing an availability message that is analyzed for affected travel segment(s) for which a schedule portion of a relational travel database is searched; and if affected travel segment(s) are found, writing a record to an availability portion of the respective relational database based on a status portion of the availability message, as recited by independent Claims 20 and 26.

Appellants further note that the Examiner has once again erroneously equated a user's booked flight (as shown in FIG. 14), with an available flight. Again, the Vance patent may disclose displaying possible itineraries in a pop up window (not a calendar) that includes availability for those itineraries, as shown in FIG. 14G. Then, and only after the user completes a reservation for a flight, the Vance patent displays the booked flight in a trip activity log 374 and calendar 376, as shown in FIG. 14H. The flight shown in FIG. 14H is not an available flight, but rather a flight selected from a list of possible itineraries (FIG. 15G), and booked or otherwise reserved by the user.

For at least the reasons given above, as well as those presented in the Appellants' Appeal Brief, Appellants respectfully submit that independent Claims 20 and 26, and by dependency Claims 21-25 and 27-31, are patentably distinct from the Vance patent.

E. Claims 32-45 are Patentably Distinct from the Vance Patent

As further explained in the Appeal Brief, in contrast to independent Claims 32 and 41, the Vance patent does not teach or suggest displaying in a calendar the dates that a given fare is available. In section 10 of the Examiner's Answer, the Examiner cites column 3, lines 44-50 (briefly describing FIGS. 16-18); column 5 (related to building a trip); and column 11, lines 41-45 (introducing FIGS. 14A-14X). None of these passages (or the Vance patent in general), however, provide any disclosure of displaying in a calendar the dates that a given fare is available. Appellants further note the Examiner's citing of the Vance patent (col. 5, ll. 13-17) disclosing displaying information including "seat preferences, special meals, frequent flier, account numbers, hotels, car rental, connecting flights, and airline equipment preferences." Appellants submit, however, that the aforementioned passage actually discloses an employee

profile database including the aforementioned information, not necessarily that the information is displayed. And even considering that such information may be displayed, the passage does not stand for the proposition that the system displays in a calendar the dates that a given fare is available, as recited by independent Claims 32 and 41.

Appellants yet again reiterate that there is a big difference between the Vance patent and independent Claims 32 and 41. The Vance patent displays itineraries for a user based on a specific departure-return date combination. In this environment, the display is not so complex as to not be discernable by a user. Independent Claims 32 and 41, however, is concerned with displaying a desired fare to a user and indicating all of the dates that that fare may be available. A fare may have a large number of itineraries associated therewith for different departure-return date combinations. To accomplish this, the claimed system displays graphically in a calendar the days that the fare is available, which allows the user to more readily decide which dates to select for departure and return.

For at least the reasons given above, as well as those presented in the Appellants' Appeal Brief, Appellants respectfully submit that independent Claims 32 and 41, and by dependency Claims 33-40 and 42-45, are patentably distinct from the Vance patent.

CONCLUSION

For at least the foregoing reasons, as well as those presented in the Appeal Brief, Appellants respectfully request that the rejections be reversed.

Respectfully submitted,



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